



Sonoma County Water Agency PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
February 3, 2009

CONTACT:
Amy Bolten
Public Information Officer
(707) 547-1981 (office)
(707) 322-8156 (mobile)

Sonoma County Energy Independence Program to Help Pay for Water Conservation Measures

(Santa Rosa, CA) – Acknowledging the increasing likelihood of a serious drought, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, also the Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors, reviewed today a program to finance water and energy efficiency measures on private properties. Sonoma County would be the first county in California to create such a program. The Sonoma County Energy Independence Program will allow Sonoma County property owners to take loans from the County to install water conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements, such as tankless water heaters, ultra low-flush toilets and solar panels. The program is expected to be up and running in early spring and would provide loans to property owners to perform energy efficiency upgrades to their business or residential properties. The loans are paid back along with the participants' property taxes over a period of twenty years. Loans would be tied to the properties, not the owners, and could therefore be passed from one owner to the next. Because the loans are paid back, with interest, the program is cost-neutral to the County.

"This program is part of the solution to our call for conservation this year," said Paul Kelley, Chairman, SCWA Board of Directors and Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. "Homeowners and businesses can use this program to permanently reduce their water use by replacing older appliances with new, water efficient appliances. In today's economy, any financial incentive to help homeowners and businesses meet our water challenges is welcome. We also anticipate that this program will economically stimulate our economy and create new, green jobs."

On February 2, 2009, officials from the Sonoma County Water Agency announced a likely 30 percent cutback in water deliveries with the potential to reach a 50 percent reduction. SCWA's retail customers -- including the cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Petaluma, Sonoma, Cotati, Windsor and the Valley of the Moon and North Marin water districts -- will likely implement strict conservation measures to meet the challenge of less water.

Residents and businesses looking for new ways to conserve water will soon be able to take advantage of the Sonoma County Energy Independence Program to help finance new technologies, including ultra-low flush toilets, waterless urinals, recirculating hot water pumps, smart irrigation controllers and many other low water use fixtures now being available. These improvements can dramatically reduce their water use with little impact to quality of life.

###

Sonoma County Water Agency provides water supply, flood protection and sanitation services for portions of Sonoma and Marin counties. Visit us on the Web at www.sonomacountywater.org.